



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
November 15th, 2011**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged, and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Bill Gray, Chair, made the following edit to the October Meeting Summary Minutes: change Howard Hughes to Howard Hodges. Mike Subin, Commissioner, made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the October Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved with the edit. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Serving Together: Troops, Veterans and Family Care Project – Jessica McNurlen, Project Director

Jessica McNurlen gave an overview about the Troops, Veterans and Family Care Project. Easter Seals was one of ten finalists awarded a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in July, 2011. The grant will provide funding of \$500,000 over a four year period with Mental Health Association (MHA) securing matching funds. MHA will be the lead agency on the project. The general goal of the project is to coordinate existing resources in the County for service members, military, National Guard, Reserve and their families.

Jessica attended a conference held by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for all of its new, current and graduated grantees. Of the 40 grantees in attendance, only two were veteran-related. Many organizations already provide their services to individuals that are military service members or veterans, but they do not know where to send them for additional resources.

One of the goals of the project is to build awareness among community providers of the unique needs of troops, veterans and their families. MHA has put together an Advisory Council that includes representatives from the Department of Defense (DoD), Maryland National Guard, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Advisory Council recently met with Montgomery College, MCPS and the DoD School Liaison who works at Walter Reed Army Medical Center to discuss providing outreach to students. DoD has a training institute for counselors and Jessica is working to connect MCPS with this program.

MHA will be developing Continuing Education (CEU) workshops to provide specialized training to mental health providers on the unique needs of the military community. MHA will also develop a website comprised of interactive online resources including local veteran events, such as career fairs, support groups, and Commission meetings, quality local resources, and links to National and Federal resources. Since feedback has been received that there are too many websites about veterans resources, the University of Maryland has provided two students from the Public Health Science Program to assist in researching recommendations made by VA and DoD in their communications plan. The recommendations will be used when designing and developing the website.

Another part of the Project will be to develop a peer navigation system that will assist veterans and families that have complex needs. Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, has been trying to connect the National Alliance on Mentally Ill (NAMI) Peer-to-Peer Counseling Program with Montgomery College's Combat 2 College program, but cannot seem to locate the right contact at Montgomery College. The Commission will continue to work on this issue.

Ann Humphrey, Representative of Congressman Van Hollen, asked if the Project will help coordinate volunteer opportunities for individuals who want to donate their time, money or goods to veterans and their families. Jessica said that the Project will coordinate volunteer opportunities as well as locate volunteers that can provide assistance with the Project. Individuals interested in volunteering can contact Jessica and she will assist in connecting them with the appropriate resources: 301-424-0656 ext. 556, e-mail jmcnurlen@mhamc.org.

[Serving Together: Troops, Veterans and Family Care Project Brochure](#)

[Serving Together: Troops, Veterans and Family Care Project FAQ Sheet](#)

IV. Update on Veterans Collaborative – Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, reported that the Military and Veterans Resource Fair held November 5th, 2011, at White Flint Mall was successful. There was a good turn out of vendors and veterans. Many veterans were linked to resources. One veteran was hired by the State Highway Administration (SHA). One vendor assisted 25 veterans with filling out job applications. Another vendor met with 32 veterans and made 7 referrals to the Vet Center. A lawyer who works at White Flint offered his property at Camp David to be used by Wounded Warriors Project.

The Veterans Collaborative Veterans Community Survey is now available online:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QW78C25>. They have received 89 responses so far – 61 from older veterans, 8 from OIF/OEF, 20 from family members. The survey will be online until the end of the year, and may be available even longer in order to capture as much data as possible.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report – Bill Gray and Jerry Godwin

A Homeless Outreach Event has hosted by Montgomery County and the City of Gaithersburg on October 19th, 2011. Bill Gray, Chair, Carly Clem, Staff, Betsy Luecking, Staff, Richard Schiffauer, Commissioner, and Winnie Ziter, Aging and Disability Services, provided resources and information at the shared Commission on Veterans Affairs and Aging and Disability Services table.

Approximately 250 homeless individuals received services include clothing, flu shots, podiatry and dental services, haircuts, manicures, and food.

The Commission hosted a Veterans Day event that featured the dedication and unveiling of the Veterans Plaza artwork entitled “Tribute to Our Veterans” at Veterans Plaza, Silver Spring. The Commission received a proclamation from County Executive Isiah Leggett and a proclamation from Governor Martin O’Malley. Bill thanked Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, and Carly Clem, Staff, for their assistance in planning the event.

The County Council’s Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee will be having a briefing on veterans issues on Thursday, November 17th. The briefing was initiated by Councilmember George Leventhal, Chair of the HHS Committee. The Committee will discuss veteran homelessness including the services available to veterans and their families, service eligibility requirements, the process for identifying veterans who come to the County for services, and efforts to coordinate services for veterans. Bill Gray will participate in the discussion, as well as Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Raymond Crowel, Chief, Behavioral Health and Crisis Services

(BHCS), Cynthia Mason-Posey, Director of Outreach & Advocacy, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA), Wayne Miller, Director, Silver Spring Vet Center, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Sharon Friedman, Executive Director, Mental Health Association (MHA) of Montgomery County. The briefing is open to the public and will be held at the County Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue.

VI. Election of Officers – Nominating Committee Slate of Officers – Presented by Carl Bedell, Commissioner

Bill Gray, Chair, asked for the slate of officers to be presented for appointment. Carl Bedell, Commissioner, had previously been appointed Chair of the Nominating Committee. On behalf of the nominating committee, Carl placed into nomination the slate of Bill Gray to continue his role as Chair and Jerry Godwin to continue his role as Vice-Chair. No other nominations were taken from the floor. Mike Subin, Commissioner, motioned to approve the slate of officers. A vote was taken and the slate of officers was elected as nominated.

VII. Updates / Motions for Commission Action

None.

VIII. Roundtable

Starting November 21st, staff from the staff from the Veterans Affairs Medical Center will be on-site at the HHS Crisis Center Monday through Wednesday. Rich Schiffauer reported that Secretary Ed Chow, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, is developing a plan to have a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) at the Crisis Center to provide services on Thursdays and Fridays. He is also seeking to increase the number of days a VSO is available at the MontgomeryWorks Wheaton location. Currently a VSO is available the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month.

Sharon Hodge, Commissioner, noted that the VA will be hosting a Winterhaven Homeless Veterans Stand Down in January, 2012. Zips Dry Cleaners is currently collecting gently used coats, sweaters, jeans, flannel shirts and sweatshirts. Donations can be dropped off at your nearest zips. View the flyer for more information: www.washingtondc.va.gov/docs/Zips-flyer.pdf.

The Commission will be holding interviews the first week in December. The Commission has three openings – two for a Veterans Service Organization and one for a public member. Commission members whose terms expired in October, 2011, are to remain on the Commission and participate, if they can, until the new members are appointed.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, received a phone call from Brie O’Neal who was very discouraged that the POW/MIA flag is not flying at the Silver Spring Civic Building. Betsy sent an e-mail out to Commissioners to discuss the issue. Mike Subin spoke with County Executive Isiah Leggett who ordered that the POW/MIA should be flying every day at all times. Mike spoke with Ginny Gong, Executive Director, Community Use of Public Facilities, about having the flag reattached. Mike will also speak with David Dise, Director, Department of General Services, about having lighting on the flags all night.

Betsy also received a request from a teacher at Walter Johnson who co-teaches 12th Grade Honors English. The class recently finished reading “The Things They Carried”, a Vietnam War novel, and “Johnny Got His Gun”, a WWI novel. The class would like to have a Veteran speak to them about their experiences. Bill Gray, Jane McCarthy, and Rich Fales offered to speak.

County Executive Isiah Leggett will be hosting a press conference on Monday, November 21st on the new [“Respect the Space” educational campaign](#) for reserved accessible parking in Montgomery

County. County Council Vice President Roger Berliner, Police Chief Tom Manger, Director of the Montgomery County Police Department Traffic Division Captain Tom Didone, and the Administrator for the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration John Kuo will provide information about the County's new initiative on reserved accessible parking. Dr. Seth Morgan and Trish Gallalee from the County's Commission on People with Disabilities will provide their personal experiences with this issue. Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, will ask her son, Army veteran Sgt. Ryan Major, who lost his legs and several fingers in a bomb attack in Ramadi, Iraq, if he can participate and represent the military community. Mike Subin, Commissioner, and Betsy Luecking, Staff, will be finalizing the event on Friday, November 18th with Lucille Baur, Office of Public Information and Staff Liaison to the Department of Police. The press conference will be held at Montgomery Mall at 1:00 p.m.. Commissioners are invited to attend the event.

Bob Pelletier, MontgomeryWorks, is scheduled to present at the next CVA meeting. He invited the Commission to host their meeting at the MontgomeryWorks office in Wheaton. It was decided that the meeting will still be held at the HHS Hungerford Drive Office, but a tour of the Wheaton office could be scheduled for another time.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, December 20th, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room.

Respectively submitted:

Carly Clem, OSC

Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison